

# Ames Historical Society

AMES • IOWA

## Newsletter to Members 2015 FALL.....ISSUE #4/4

*Discovering our history,  
Preserving our past,  
Sharing our stories.*



Peek into windows to see artifacts.

### Ames Historical Society Board:

**Co-President** Mary Atherly  
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The Board meets the 2nd Thursday of each month 6:45pm at 416 Douglas. Members welcome!

### Staff:

**Executive Director** Casie Vance  
**Projects Coordinator** Alex Fejfar  
**Collections Mgr./Volunteer Coord.** Hannah Frederick

### Emeritus Staff:

Alan Spohnheimer, Margaret Vance,  
Dennis Wendell

Ames Historical Society is an incorporated, 501c3 not-for-profit organization whose mission is to engage our diverse public and provide unique opportunities to learn about Ames history.

**Headquarters:** 416 Douglas, Ames, IA 50010  
**Hours:** Open Mon-Fri, 1-5pm, Sat 10am-4pm  
**Mail:** PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010  
**Phone:** 515-232-2148  
**E-mail:** info@ameshistory.org  
**Website:** www.AmesHistory.org  
**Facebook:** www.facebook.com/ameshistoricalsociety

The newsletter is published four times a year for AHS members. Direct comments and questions to: Editor, PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010 or e-mail above. Editor: Kathy Svec

**Hoggatt School** is located on the grounds of Meeker School, near 18<sup>th</sup> and Burnett, Ames, Iowa. Due to construction at Meeker School, Hoggatt will be closed until spring 2016.

## — A Time of — EXPANSION THE AMES BUILDING BOOM OF 1915-1916

### New Exhibit Continues to October 22, 2016

The newest exhibit at the Ames History Center looks back 100 years to a time when the citizens of Ames saw their town take a great leap into what could easily be called the “modern era.”

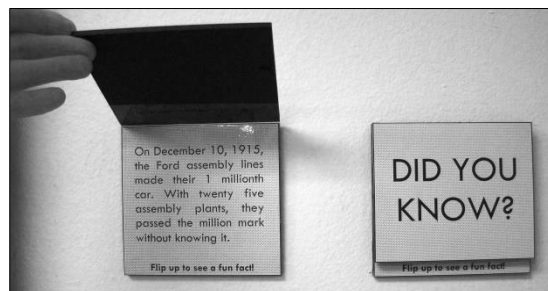
At that time, town leaders recognized that civic improvements were needed if Ames was to be known as a progressive community with amenities that served the real needs of residents and visitors. 1915-16 saw a boom of activity.

The exhibit tells the stories of four iconic buildings constructed in those years through text, photographs, artifacts and flip-up fun facts:

- The 1915 City Hall - Municipal Building
- Mary Greeley Hospital
- The Masonic Building
- The Sheldon-Munn Hotel



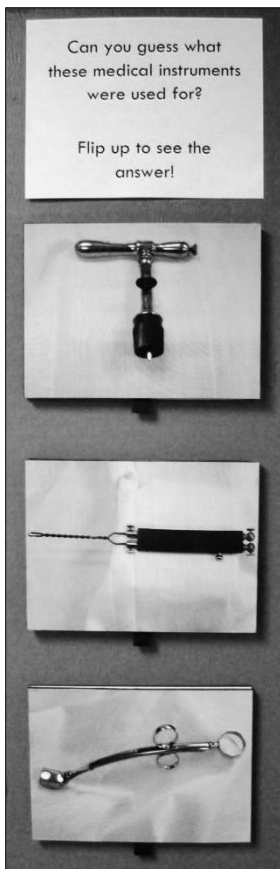
The exhibit features a small-scale version of the 1915 City Hall, with peek-in windows and a pull-out cornerstone with replicas of its former contents.



## “Expansion” Exhibit & Local Stories



The Sheldon-Munn portion features the 1950s former lobby mural by John Huseby and furniture from a guest room – as well as tales of the “human fly” that climbed the hotel’s front wall!



The Mary Greeley Hospital section displays medical instruments and asks visitors to try to guess what each was used for (flip-up for answers).

Also featured are pictures of Mary and Wallace Greeley and the woman who was the first nursing supervisor, Katharina Diehl. Pictures also document the many additions to the hospital over time.

Of the four structures, only the original hospital no longer exists. It was added onto and remodeled many times, and then taken down around 1996 during an expansion project.

The Masonic Building at 5<sup>th</sup> and Douglas was also a Greeley project (formerly Collegiate Mfg., now the Octagon Center for the Arts).



The exhibit is on view at 416 Douglas six days/week: Monday – Friday, 1-5pm, Saturday, 10am-4pm. Closed 11/26-27.

Watch for announcement of special programs that will be offered in conjunction with the exhibit.

## 1915-16 Saw Big Improvements!

The headline in the February 11, 1916 Ames Evening Times and Souvenir Edition read:

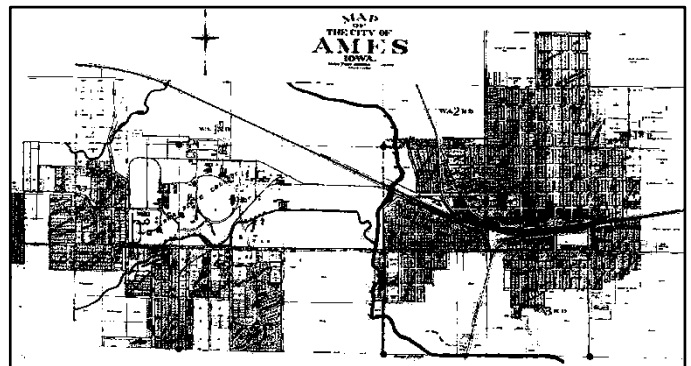
**Almost a Million Spent in Ames in Past Year  
Public and Private Improvements  
Reach Astonishing Total for  
Fastest Growing City in Central West  
All Records Broken**

Here are a few amazing facts from that article:  
In 1915:

- Ames population: 5,091
- Almost 200 private residences built
- City Hall under construction at ~\$45,000
- Sanitary sewer extended, \$80,000
- New light plant built, \$132,000
- Street grading in areas around the college, \$6,219
- Sidewalks improved, \$3,592
- Curb and gutter paving, \$267,798
- Ft. Dodge, Des Moines & Southern RR built a new interurban station at Grand Ave & Lincoln Way

Scheduled for 1916:

- Paving of over 8 miles of residential streets
- Additional extension of sanitary sewer system
- New gas plant to be built by Iowa Public Service Co.
- New Masonic Temple under consideration
- Completion of Mary Greeley Hospital
- Completion of Sheldon-Munn Hotel
- Purchase of the first motorized fire engine



Map of Ames in 1916, 16<sup>th</sup> Street (north) to South 4<sup>th</sup>

Other notable events:

- In 1913, Lincoln Highway came through Ames, the first trans-continental auto route.
- In February 1916, the Ames Evening Times went from weekly to daily publication.
- In 1916, the Morris Livery on Main Street closed due to increasing use of the automobile.
- 1916 - Pres. William H. Taft and orator Williams Jennings Bryan spoke at State Gym on campus.

## Society News – Around the Ames History Center

### New Exhibits in December

Find these in the hallway display areas:

- **Julia Laughlin, Station Master:** Julia Laughlin served as the Ames train depot station master from 1917 into the 1920s. She took on the job due to a shortage of men during WWI, but soon became a local celebrity and point of pride.
- **Central Junior High School:** Learn all about the buildings that were used for Ames' junior high school-aged students until the current middle school was built.

### New Tribune Feature Stories

The Ames Tribune will begin featuring a monthly story on interesting happenings at the History Center. The first appeared on November 10, announcing our 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. Watch for them each month!

### Some Knew Harley!



In the last newsletter, we put out a call for Society members who knew Harley Wilhelm, a former scientist at Iowa State. His granddaughter, Teresa Wilhelm Waldof, is writing his biography and she was pleased and excited to receive a number of responses! Contact her at 507-285-5659 or twaldof@yahoo.com.

### Upcoming Events

- Sat., Dec. 5, noon-4pm, our annual **Old Fashioned Christmas** at the History Center with kid crafts 12-2pm, Santa from 2-4pm, treats and Gift Shop browsing.
- Sat., March 5, 10am, Society Annual meeting at the Ames Public Library, Farwell Brown Auditorium



**2016 Lecture Series**, moved to Ames Public Library, Farwell Brown Auditorium, all at 7pm:

- Tues., March 29, History of Mary Greeley Hospital, celebrating its centennial
- Wed., April 27, Geologic and human history of the land that is now Ada Hayden Heritage Park
- Tues., May 24, Iowa State's football controversy in 1894-1897
- Wed., June 29, Billy Sunday's life story

### Remembering Jack Adams

When former Board member and long-time Ames resident, Jack (John F.) Adams passed away on August 6, many of us around the History Center felt as though we'd lost one of our best direct links to big chapters of local history. He was 83.

In addition to vivid Ames growing-up and school memories, Jack lent us his expertise on local companies he worked for: Collegiate Manufacturing and Ames Millwork. He always had great stories – including the one about being the guy inside the first Cy mascot



costume in 1954 (made by Collegiate)! We are so pleased to have Jack on the DVD of Collegiate's history.

Around the Ames Historical Society, Jack and his wife Barbara are famous for being part of the diligent team that performed the miracle of raising money during the

2008 recession to buy the building at 416 Douglas – the first permanent home ever for Ames history. Jack will live in our hearts for a very, very long time.

### Society Wish List:

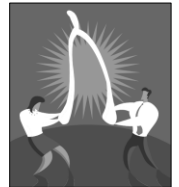
Grateful thanks go to John and Suzan Shierholz for funding a Knox Box (fire safety) and to Tom and Sharon Frederick for extending our subscription to Newspaperarchive.com.

Thank you all so very much!

Still needed:

- Photos of Ames in the 1960s (this decade is largely missing from the Ames Tribune archive).
- Funds for a 2<sup>nd</sup> humidifier w/ auto-shutoff ~\$185
- Donations for a much-needed website upgrade
- Compact-VHS to VHS converter
- Funding for a regular student internship position
- Ongoing subscription to newspaperarchive.com (6 months - \$99.95)

Contact us at 515-232-2148 or [info@ameshistory.org](mailto:info@ameshistory.org) if you can help!



### Home Tour To Benefit Society

On Dec. 5-6, 1-5pm, the annual Ames Altrusa Home Tour will feature five homes decked out for the holidays - one of which is Board member Sharon Wirth's home at The Roosevelt (the remodeled school). Tickets are available at Coe's, Mary Kay's and Evert's Flowers and from club members; \$12 in advance \$15 at the door. The proceeds will benefit the Society, among others.

### Transcribing Shared Stories: An Ames Oral History Project

by Janet Klaas, Society volunteer



Five years ago, the late Rollie Struss and his wife, Willie, developed the concept for an Ames oral history project and won a major grant from Wells Fargo Bank. For a couple of

years the project was called, “Did You Know . . .?”

Using a hand-held video camera during those early 2010 and 2011 interviews, Rollie and Willie traded off being camera operator and interviewer, asking the questions that prodded the memories of interviewees. This was the beginning of what is presently a collection of **67** oral history interviews.

The videos often contain photographs, maps, and other memorabilia. Several men recounted their participation in World War II. Grace Amemiya spoke movingly of her family’s internment in a Japanese-American prisoners’ camp in Arizona during WWII. Norton Mezvinsky related his family’s life as one of the few Jewish families in Ames in the 1940s and 50s, where his father Abe operated several grocery stores. During a visit to Ames from Florida in 2011, Zelletia Leininger spoke of her large family’s dance, gymnastics and acrobatics school on Grand Avenue. Zelletia and her sister Medea performed for and travelled with the Ringling Bros. Circus.

Kathy Svec, Dick Haws, Sara Vouthilak, and Dennis Wendell have also served as interviewers. In early 2010, Teresa Beer Larson became involved when she conducted interviews with three prominent Ames builder-developers: Bob Buck, Reiny Friedrich and Erb and Marge Hunziker. After that, she became the primary interviewer. Her career as an anchor person for WHO-TV in Des Moines gave her experience in research and presentation, the perfect background for the project.



The Strusses were always interested in having transcripts of the interviews and I agreed to take this on as a volunteer task. Initially, I felt that I would simply provide keyword access to each interview, rather than a transcript. I felt that a full transcript would be a tedious

job and that it would take two people to accomplish the task. Also, what kind of transcript would be best - verbatim, with all the pauses, misspeaks, repetitions, start-overs [in other words, how most people talk in daily life] or a smooth and heavily edited copy that would convey what the person was saying but be easier for the reader to comprehend?

I gave up the idea of “key words” and began to recruit partners to work with me on the project. Because we didn’t actually start doing the transcripts until 2011, we were behind from the moment we started!

My first partner was Anita Beal, followed by Kathy Coronos. Presently, I work with Kitty Fisher, Cynthia Pease (below, top) and Barbara Munson (below, right). I hope that with four of us, we will work through the backlog and keep up with new interviews. Working with my able partners makes the time fly.



After the transcripts are typed, I edit them at home and add visual materials that are then placed in notebooks that also contain DVDs of the interviews.

When I began transcribing these interviews, I thought that the work would be tedious. But I soon found that the amazing lives of the people we met through these shared stories made this volunteer activity well worth doing. We could use more volunteers for this project that is now called, “Shared Stories.”

Presently there are 42 transcripts that have been edited and enhanced; 9 transcripts wait to be edited and enhanced; and 16 interviews are yet-to-be-transcribed.

The finished transcript notebooks are available for check-out from the media room at the History Center. One Society member is a regular, checking out two or three notebooks at a time to take home to enjoy. She is finding out things about friends that she never knew!

# Society News – Shared Stories Project

## Shared Stories Evolve

By Teresa “TJ” Larson, project leader

The “Shared Stories” project continues to evolve. In recent months, a few ideas rich with visual possibilities have emerged as prospects for expanded coverage.

With the help of Jeff Grummer from B&G Productions, I have been able to produce two full length documentaries for the Society: one on the last run of the newspaper printing press in Ames and another on the influence of Collegiate Manufacturing. The professional involvement of the production company was made possible by grants.

But, what if the “Shared Stories” team could produce short in-house documentaries?

I began working with Society staff member Alex Feifar to develop his videography skills and the answer became apparent: that concept can move from possibility to reality!

Currently Alex and I are videotaping interviews with the key players involved with the transformation of Roosevelt Elementary School from a classroom building to a condo development.



Each of the interviews could stand alone as a “Shared Stories” piece, but edited and taken together they form a compelling story. Adding to the narrative are historical pictures from the Society’s archive, developer Dean Jensen’s illustrations from the demolition and reconstruction of the building and a personalized tour of the refurbished interior by resident Sharon Wirth.

There is no target date for completion, but work on this short documentary goes on as time allows.

In the meantime, I continue to do solo interviews of persons for the “Shared Stories” library. Most recently I talked to John McKinney, the city judge at the time of the Ames City Hall bombing in May 1970. He was also the “near victim” of an incendiary device placed in his garage a few weeks before! I welcome suggestions for new interviews –contact me at the History Center.

## The Shared Stories List:

### COMPLETED NOTEBOOKS (edited and enhanced)

Adams, Jack...2011      Adams, Terry...2010  
Amemiya, Grace...2011  
Ames High Class of 1963...2013  
Ames P.E.O. Founders...2013  
Anderson, Martha Coover...2012  
Aurand, Elmer...2010      Bath, John...2011  
Buck, Bob...2010      Benbrook, Stanley...2011  
Benson, Marjorie...2014      Bleyle, Carl (CUMC)...2013  
Bleyle, Carl (Musica Antiqua)...2013  
Carr, Mary Martin...2012  
Carter, William J...2011      Drexler, Burt...2010  
Eness, Margot...2014      Gagnier, Edward...2015  
Hach-Darrow, Kathryn “Kitty”...2012  
Horowitz, Carole...2014  
Humphrey, Jean Listebarger...2011  
Hurlbut, Rowena...2011      Jacobson, Liese...2010  
Ketelsen, Art...2012      Kleinschmidt, John...2012  
Larsen, Einar...2012      McFarland Nurses...2013  
Miller, Thelma...2011      Mosier, Barbara...2011  
Moorman, Robert...2011      Munn, Joy...2012  
Olson, Dean (Bloomington area)...2011  
Penkhus, Floyd...2010      Powell, Jack...2011  
Pyle, Bill...2011  
Svec, Edna & Kathy + Volker, Carol & Roger ...2010  
Tedesco, Ted...2011      Watkins, Mary Taff...2013  
Wheeler, Mary Lou Fritsch...2012  
Weiss, Harry...2012      Zeliadt, Iveta...2013

### TRANSCRIPTS COMPLETED (but not edited & enhanced)

Ames High School Class of 1964...2014  
Christian, Lynn...2011  
Craig, Julie + Harrison, Peggy...2012  
Friedrich, Reiny...2010      Mezvinsky, Norton...2013  
Rake, Harold...2011      Waters, Bill...2012  
Whetstone, Edna...2011      Woodward, Del...2012

### TRANSCRIPTS TO-BE-TYPED

Ames Children’s Theater...2015  
Anderson, Ruth...2013      Bowlers (Senior League)...2010  
Brentnall, Dale...2010      Cue, James...2010  
Hunziker, Erb & Marge...2010  
Kearns, Mary McNabb...2015  
Leininger, Zelletia...2011      McKinney, John...2015  
Metzger, Mary...2015      Morgan, Norma Shellito...2015  
Mulhall, Gary...2013      Nelson, Jerry...2014  
Pasley, Mary...2011      Peterson, Wayne...2012  
Ripp, Bill...2013      Speck, Mark...2014  
Taylor, Bob...2013



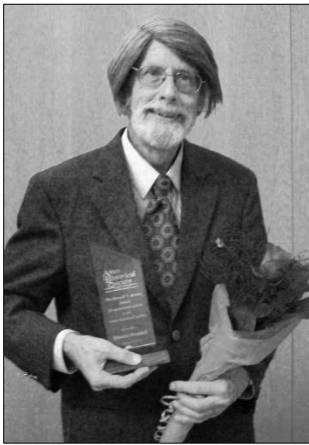
Shared Stories notebooks and other Society videos may be checked out and enjoyed at home or played at the History Center on equipment in the Struss Media Room.



## Society News – Around the Ames History Center

### F. Brown Award to Wendell

At the annual benefit dinner, retired curator Dennis Wendell received the Farwell T. Brown Award. The



Brown award is the highest recognition the Society bestows.

In 1999, the Society rented space at 427 Douglas to begin a “demonstration museum” to present exhibits. We used Farwell Brown’s photos and writings and borrowed artifacts from Ames families because we did not have a collection of our own.

In 2001, the Society moved to 108 Fifth Street and began re-thinking what we could provide as a resource for local history. By 2001, Dennis had retired from the ISU Library and was ready to begin volunteering. He had an interest in gathering a historic collection, so he set to the task using his library knowledge to develop an organizational system for categorizing materials.

As a life-long Ames resident, Dennis knew where to make contacts to obtain key items – one of the most significant was the Tribune photo archive, one of our most-used resources. As he observed changes - such as the closing of businesses - he sought out owners to obtain artifacts, sometimes teetering on the top of ladders to rescue signs! Due to his prodigious efforts, many very important materials are now in our care.

Back in 2001, we had one half-time employee so in addition to collections, Dennis researched and presented stories, wrote policy, developed material for our website when it was launched, treated volunteers in his home, made contacts with organizations that could help us, donated substantial amounts of real cash to get things done -- and dozens of other large and small tasks that set the pace for our relationship with the community. We were eventually able to pay him a small salary, but nothing close to what he deserved. Eventually, he gave up that salary so we could reallocate those dollars to support hiring our young staff.

Through all this activity and growth, Dennis has been a dedicated and visionary staff member, and now, a loyal volunteer, supporting our efforts and urging us to maintain high standards as the guardians of our collective heritage. We thank you, Dennis!

### Vance Steps Back



Our part-time staff member-volunteer, Margaret Vance, stepped back from her duties at the History Center at the end of the summer. She has been the friendly face greeting visitors during open hours on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays since 2010.

In addition to staffing the front desk, her many talents have been evident during her years of service: creating appealing visual displays, researching questions on local history, assembling authoritative programs and presentations, hosting events, serving on committees and providing calm advice and wisdom to her co-workers.

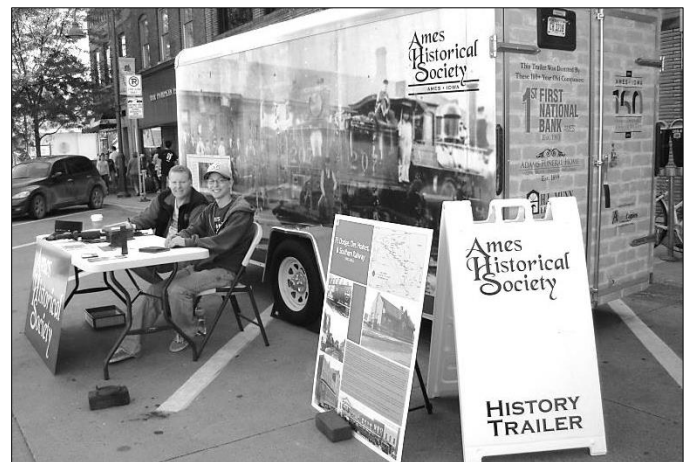
Happily, she intends to continue with certain parts of her volunteer activities, so we won’t have to go “cold turkey” – though we’ll miss her more regular presence. Thank you, Margaret, for making such a difference!

(We are still seeking volunteer front desks hosts to fill her former spot.)

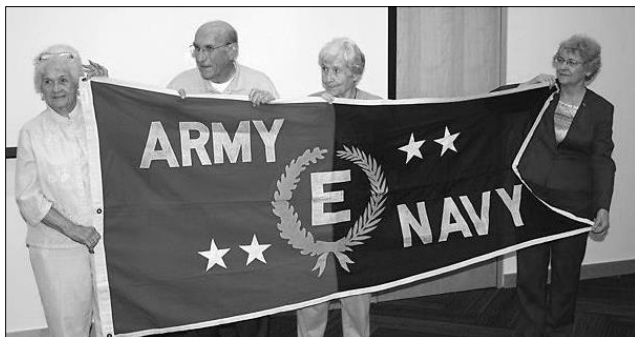
### History Trailer on the Move!

This summer, the History Trailer added a special monthly feature to the Main Street Farmers Market and appeared twice at the North Grand Market. At each appearance, a special theme and artifacts were presented to engage Market visitors.

Pictured below are two friendly trailer hosts, volunteer Eric Wierson and staffer, Alex Fejfar.



Last Spring, the trailer visited students at Edwards, Fellows and Mitchell Schools and this fall, Meeker, to enhance 3<sup>rd</sup> graders’ study of local history.



### Lecture Draws Big Crowd

A standing room only audience of over 200 packed the Farwell Brown Auditorium of the Ames Public Library on Sept. 9 for the Society's lecture, "The Ames Connection to WWII's Manhattan Project." As usual, audience members provided new information.

A surprise attendee was Jack Boyt, who in 1942 was a 20-year old Iowa State sophomore in Chemical Engineering. A fraternity brother, Dr. Fulmer's son, Bob, asked if he was interested in a top secret project in the Chemistry building. (Bob was already employed by the Ames Project.) Jack was interviewed by Dr. Spedding and hired on the spot. Jack was a Junior Metallurgic Research Assistant and worked for 3 ½ years with four other fellows, heading up three shifts laboring 24/7 until production ceased. Jack may be the last surviving person to have worked on the Ames Project. He is 93.

Harley Wilhelm was second-in-command in the Ames Project laboratory under Spedding - in charge of day-to-day operations that kept the research going. Toward the end of the program, it was revealed that Wilhelm was the only individual ever to be awarded the U.S. Military's "E" Flag for "excellence in the production of war equipment" during World War II. His four children, Lorna, Max, Myrna and Gretchen, (L to R above), displayed his flag, a treasured family artifact. Iowa State College was the only academic institution to be awarded an E Flag for its work in developing an economical way to mass produce uranium. Collegiate Manufacturing also received an E flag for its production of military raincoats and ponchos.

An audience member from Oak Ridge, TN, site of the Manhattan Project's "secret city", told a story about a new baby named Uranium – a named nixed by security!

Another story shared was about the Japanese man who wanted to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dropping of the first atomic bomb. Why? He was a soldier preparing to fight whose life was spared when the war ceased.

### Another Ames Project Footnote

In an interesting coincidence, this message arrived from Hilary Billman: "I am researching the Manhattan Project and Robert Oppenheimer. I lived in Ames from 2005-07 in a house we rented at 1253 Orchard Ave. We were told that Robert Oppenheimer had once stayed there and I would like to know if this is true. I know that the house was owned by Frank Spedding of the Ames Project/Ames Laboratory and that Oppenheimer came to Ames in March 1955 to be the first lecturer in the John Franklin Carlson lecture series (Carlson was Oppenheimer's former student)." Society members with information about Oppenheimer's stay may contact the History Center. Oppenheimer was the lead scientist at Los Alamos during WWII.

### News Briefs

FESTIVAL OF TREES: See the Society's festive decorated tree and many others at the Octagon Center for the Arts through November 29. Viewing is M-F, 10am-5pm, Sa-Su, 1-5pm, closed 11/26-27.



IOWA 101: An online Iowa history course has been instigated by historian Tom Morain and launched by the Des Moines Register, Graceland University, Des Moines Area Community College and Humanities Iowa. Go to [www.DesMoinesRegister.com/iowa101](http://www.DesMoinesRegister.com/iowa101) to see chapters such as "What was life like for pioneer families?" New chapters will be presented every-other-week.

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK: Join the 945 people who follow us through Facebook! It's a great way to stay in touch with goings on at the History Center.

HOW TO DONATE ARTIFACTS: Those interested in contributing Ames artifacts or archives to our collection are asked to first give us a call or send an email. We can let you know if the items you have will fit our collections guidelines and if so, set a time for drop-off. 515-232-2148, [info@ameshistory.org](mailto:info@ameshistory.org).

### Membership Race is On!



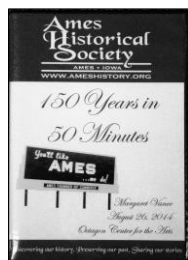
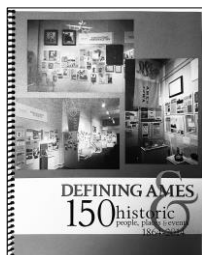
The Society's Membership Committee set a goal of 50 new members in 2015. The total by early November was 44. If current members would like to help us meet our goal, consider a year-end donation of gift memberships! Gifted members will receive a notice from the Society. Memberships provide essential, broad-based, ongoing support for the Society's operations.

Ames Historical Society  
PO Box 821  
Ames, Iowa 50010

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## Museum Shop



**10% off in the Shop through December 23**  
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**NEW:** hand-thrown Ames mug featuring the Bandshell  
\$18; deep blue or yellow; great for hostess gifts.

**DEFINING AMES: Second Edition**  
all text from the Sesquicentennial exhibit – just \$10!

**DVDs:** Society-produced videos on many  
local history topics - each \$15

**NEW: AHS LOGO BOOK BAG:** canvas, \$15

**Bring this coupon for 25% off your entire  
purchase in the Museum Shop.**  
(members only; expires January 31, 2016)

Open Mon-Fri 1-5pm, Sat 10am-4pm or by appointment

## Appealing To You

As 2015 draws to a close, we hope you will consider an end-of-year donation. A letter will soon arrive with this annual request. These dollars enable us to take big steps in serving YOU and all of the Ames community.

**We thank** our members, donors,  
business sponsors, collaborators, volunteers  
and all those who have given their  
time, stories and enthusiasm.

**You have made so much possible!**

## Is it time to renew your membership?

Renewals are due on the one-year anniversary of last year's payment. Check this newsletter's label for information about your membership. Memberships fund the day-to-day operations of the Society, allowing us to continue to be a valued community resource. We thank you!

<b>Introductory - 1st year</b>	<b>\$15</b>	<b>Partner</b>	<b>\$250</b>
<b>Basic</b>	<b>\$30</b>	<b>Benefactor</b>	<b>\$500</b>
<b>Friend</b>	<b>\$50</b>	<b>Patron</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>
<b>Sustaining</b>	<b>\$100</b>		

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

**Ames Historical Society, PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010**